



Information about School Closures Under the New York State Guidance

Why is my school being closed?

The New York City Health Department has identified a confirmed case of COVID-19 in a student or staff member in your school and is requiring your school to close as directed by New York State.

What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is a coronavirus, a type of virus that can cause either mild illness, such as a cold, or can make people sick with pneumonia. There is community person-to-person transmission COVID-19 in New York City, meaning there are cases that have no known link to travel. For context, this is similar to the flu or other common colds that circulate seasonally.

There are no specific vaccines or treatments available for this novel coronavirus, or any other coronavirus. However, medication and vaccine research is underway.

What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

Symptoms of COVID-19 can include fever, cough, or shortness of breath. Most people with COVID-19 will have mild symptoms. An infection can result in death, but that is a rare outcome. People who are at most risk for severe illness are those aged 50 and older, and people with health conditions including: chronic lung disease, heart disease, diabetes, cancer, or a weakened immune system. These people should avoid unnecessary large gatherings.

How can I prevent COVID-19?

Health Department recommends the following precautions to slow the spread of COVID-19:

- Stay home if you are sick. Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue or sleeve when sneezing or coughing—do not use your hands.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Do not touch your face with unwashed hands.
- Do not shake hands. Instead, wave or elbow bump.
- If you have family or friends who are elderly, have compromised immune systems, or chronic respiratory or coronary issues, do not visit them if you feel sick. Stay home and keep your loved ones safe.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or disinfecting wipes.
- Get your **flu shot**. Although the flu shot will not protect you from COVID-19, it will help prevent the flu which has similar symptoms to this coronavirus.

Will I know who in my school has tested positive for COVID-19?

No. A medical diagnosis is private information, and the Health Department will not share the information with administrators, teachers or anyone else in the school.



What should I do about rumors or gossip in my school about people experiencing COVID-19?

The Health Department encourages you to create a supportive environment in your school to prevent and address fear and stigma around COVID-19. Please help separate facts from fear and guard against stigma and discrimination. Many posts on social media and stories in the news are not rooted in science and are offensive, demeaning and racist. Speak out against negative behaviors, including negative statements on social media about groups of people, students, teachers, staff or parents in your school community; or exclusion of people who pose no risk from regular activities.

Remember that anyone returning to school healthy after being sick presents no increased risk to the school community and should be treated like all other colleagues, staff and students.

How will my school community be notified that school is closing?

The City Health Department will provide you with information for you to use when communicating the closure to your school community. Under the State Guidance, the communication must align with the communication plan in your emergency operations plan.

What should I do during the 24 hours when my school is closed?

There is evidence of community transmission the virus that causes COVID-19 in NYC and the global spread of this virus has been declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization. For that reason, all New Yorkers should be self-monitoring themselves for symptoms of fever (feeling feverish or having a temperature of 100.4°F), new cough, new shortness of breath, or new sore throat. Also, practice “social distancing” which means avoiding unnecessary social interactions.

What should I do if my child is sick?

Students who are most at risk for serious illness are those with those who have chronic conditions, such as heart disease, lung disease, cancer, diabetes or a weakened immune system. These students and their families should closely monitor for symptoms of COVID-19 (new fever, cough or shortness of breath) and stay in close contact with their provider.

If you or a family member develop new symptoms (feeling feverish or having a temperature of 100.4°F, new cough, new shortness of breath):

- Monitor yourself for 3-4 days.
- Most people do not need testing for COVID-19 if they are not admitted to the hospital. Accessing unnecessary health care when you don't need it may lead to spread of COVID-19 and could prevent others with more serious illness from medical care.
- If you do not get better, call your healthcare provider.
- If you don't require medical care, stay home until you are fever-free for 72 hours without the use of fever reducing medicine like Tylenol before you go back to work or school.
- As much as possible, separate yourself (for example, stay in another room) from other family members, especially those who are 50 years of age or older or who have chronic conditions like lung disease, heart disease, diabetes, cancer or a weakened immune system.
- Clean high-touch surfaces (such as faucet handles, doorknobs and light switches) frequently with disinfectant products (such as Clorox, Purell, and Peroxide products).



What can I do if I feel overwhelmed or distressed?

Emotional reactions to stressful situations such as this emerging health issue are expected. It is normal to feel sad, anxious or overwhelmed, or have other symptoms of distress, such as trouble sleeping. If symptoms become worse, last longer than a month or if you struggle to participate in your usual daily activities, reach out for support and help. You can call NYC Well at 888-NYC-WELL (888-692-9355) or text “WELL” to 65173. NYC Well is a confidential helpline that is staffed 24/7 by trained counselors who can provide brief supportive therapy, crisis counseling, and connections to behavioral health treatment and support in over 200 languages.

How long will my school be closed?

The State Guidance requires the school to be closed for 24-hours. During the 24 hours, the Health Department will assess the school environment and determine when the school will reopen.

Do students or staff need to stay home while the school is closed?

No. The State Guidance addresses school closure and does not address individuals. Anyone required or recommended to stay home will receive individualized information.

Should staff or students be tested because of this case of COVID-19 in our school?

No. Students and staff do not need to be tested just because their school was closed.

I know about a case of COVID-19 in my school. Should I inform the City Health Department?

No. The Health Department does not need schools to report cases to them. We will contact a school if they need to close.

I know a student or staff is being tested for COVID-19. Do I need to take action while results are pending?

No. You do not need to take action because of a pending COVID-19 test.